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2022

## SAMHSA SOAR APRIL E-NEWS



### **New Social Security Liaisons Assist Partner Organizations to Help Vulnerable Populations: How SOAR Providers Can Take Part!**

### **Vulnerable Population Application Program (VPAP)**

#### **How SOAR Providers Can Take Part!**

Recently, many SOAR State and Local Leads participated in calls with all 10 Social Security Administration (SSA) regional communication offices to learn about SSA's new Vulnerable Population Application Program (VPAP) (also called "People Facing Barriers" and "Third Party Application Taking") initiative.

SSA has been working with community organizations and groups to identify new ways to improve access to services for the most vulnerable populations. As a result, SSA has designated a new position in field offices (FOs) across the country, Vulnerable Populations Liaisons (VPLs). VPLs will work with organizations in local communities to help often-underserved individuals who may not have been able to submit Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI), and aged benefits during the COVID-19

pandemic due to SSA FO closures. The VPL will work directly with organizations that commit to helping file SSI claims or providing information sufficient to protect a claimant for benefits at the earliest date possible (the Protective Filing Date).

We are sharing this opportunity from SSA, which may help individuals who cannot be served through the SOAR model because of certain circumstances.

[Continue Reading](#)



## April Is the Month of the Military Child!

In recognition of the [Month of the Military Child](#), we want to highlight resources the SAMHSA SOAR TA Center has available for children and families in the armed forces community.

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) grant program [Supportive Services for Veteran Families](#) (SSVF) is critical to preventing and ending homelessness for Veteran families. SSVF can provide Veteran families with time-sensitive, housing-focused interventions, such as linking to mainstream resources and income supports that promote housing stability. The [SSVF and SOAR Integration Toolkit](#) provides detailed guidance from VA about how to incorporate the SOAR model into services for Veterans and their families.

The [SOAR Online Course: Child Curriculum](#) trains caseworkers to assist children (under age 18) who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness and have a serious mental illness, medical impairment, and/or a co-occurring substance use disorder to apply for SSI. Children with disabilities living in military families may benefit from the additional income and health insurance available with SSI and Medicaid eligibility.

## Spring Into Outcomes!

We are more than halfway through the outcomes collection season (July 1, 2021–June 30, 2022), and summer will be here before we know it! If you haven't logged into your [Online Application Tracking \(OAT\) account](#) lately, dust off that password, update your pending claims, and add in your new decisions!

Review the [OAT User Guides](#) and check out the recording from one of our [SOAR OAT Orientations](#) for a refresher on using the system.

[See How SOAR Works](#)

## SOAR Voices: Building Trust for Success in California

Erin Dooley from Shasta County Health and Human Services in Redding, California, wrote in to share this incredible SOAR success story:



“Tim Taylor\* was unhoused, living in an encampment, and had applied for SSI/State Supplementary Payment (SSP) twice before. A disability advocacy referral was submitted through the General Assistance program. After reviewing his age, disabilities, and treatment records, it was decided that he would make an excellent SOAR applicant.

Tim was notably anxious about the SSI/SSP application and just ‘wanted to get it done.’ After explaining the SOAR process and the thoroughness of the application, he was happy to have the ongoing support of an advocate.

After submitting the initial application on October 25, I made sure to follow up with Disability Determination Services (DDS) every other week. The DDS analyst was thrilled to have an Authorized Representative involved in the process. On January 4, Tim was approved. The application only took 71 days from filing to decision! Tim is now in temporary housing, working with a Housing Social Worker to secure permanent housing, and is receiving in-depth care for his chronic conditions. He told me, ‘I’m not afraid that I’m going to die out there anymore. Thank you for helping save my life.’

I have found that people often feel as though they are just another name or piece of paper. The SOAR process is person-focused and provides the recipient with support and care, which may not be present elsewhere in their lives.”

## State of California - Department of State Hospitals - Coalinga VIP Award for the SOAR Team

Ms. Deborah Dunham and the Department of State Hospitals- Coalinga (DSH - Coalinga) Social Work SOAR Team have been selected to receive a State of California - Department of State Hospitals VIP Award. This award program is the official Department-wide award program that recognizes employees and teams for work that promotes the values of the Department of State Hospitals. Ms. Dunham and the DSH - Coalinga Social Work SOAR Team’s accomplishments are being recognized in the category of Excellence in Partnership.

DSH - Coalinga received a SAMHSA SOAR Technical Assistance Center 2019 SOAR and Criminal Justice Technical Assistance Award which included SOAR implementation assistance and a spot at the SOAR Leadership Academy. The DSH - Coalinga SOAR program includes a partnership between several internal stakeholders, the Social Security Administration, the Disability Determination Services, and community-based organizations. Since implementation, the DSH - Coalinga SOAR Team has achieved a 72% approval rate on SOAR-assisted SSI/SSDI applications in an average of 70 days to decision!

The success of the DSH - Coalinga SOAR Pilot program has led Ms. Dunham to apply and be selected to oversee a one-year project that targets evidenced-based practices in discharge planning and community reintegration to highlight and recommend programs for statewide implementation in hospital practices in these areas. One of the goals of this project is to integrate the SOAR model into all five state hospitals.

Congratulations Ms. Dunham and the DSH - Coalinga Social Work SOAR Team! Your success serves as a model for other state hospitals nationally and ongoing efforts to connect individuals to vital income and benefits which support successful community reintegration.

[Submit Your SOAR Success](#)

\*Sharing Our Successes stories are edited for brevity and clarity. All names have been changed to protect anonymity.

### **SOARing Over Lunch Conference Call**

*April 12, 2022, 1:00-2:00 p.m. ET*

[Add SOARing Over Lunch to Your Calendar](#)

### **SOAR Online Course: Adult Curriculum Review Session**

*April 13, 2022, 2:00-5:00 p.m. ET*

Have you completed the SOAR Online Course: Adult Curriculum but feel that there are some aspects of the process you would like to review? We are offering an opportunity for SOAR-trained practitioners to attend a virtual SOAR Online Course Review Session facilitated by the SAMHSA SOAR TA Center. We will review what you learned in the Adult Curriculum and discuss the key components of the SOAR-assisted SSI/Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) application process.

[Register for the Review Session\\*](#)

\*You must have passed the SOAR Online Course to attend this event.



## **SOAR OAT and Outcomes Orientation**

*April 19, 2022, 2:00-3:00 p.m. ET*

Have you registered for the SOAR OAT program? If so, are you using OAT consistently?

We will take you step-by-step through the process from registering for an account to entering details about the application. We will also address many common questions and discuss how you can use your outcomes to promote SOAR in your community!

[Register Today](#)

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## **In Case You Missed It**

### **[SOAR Webinar Rewind! Equity in Action: Leveraging SAMHSA](#)**

### **[SOAR Technical Assistance to Improve Systems](#)**

In this webinar, held on March 24, 2022, participants got a chance to review the work that has been done to address the barriers to equity in SOAR implementation with the development of resources, tools, and training. SOAR leaders discussed how these resources have been used to promote equity and reduce the impact of implicit bias in the implementation of SOAR work within their agencies.

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## **Application Tip! Submitting Applications, Online Forms**

When completing a SOAR application, a portion may be done on paper, while other parts can be submitted online. The SAMHSA SOAR TA Center suggests submitting as many forms as possible online to help ensure completeness and avoid slowdowns during the review process. Once you have set the protective filing date online (stopped at the reentry number) and your

60 days is coming to a close, you will log back on using the reentry number and complete the [SSA-16](#) and [SSA-3368](#) online. We recommend completing the forms with your applicant on paper first so that you can reference them throughout the online process!

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## Federal Updates

### SSA Update for In-Person Appointments

SSA has announced that in early April, local Social Security offices plan to add more in-person appointments and will again offer in-person services for people without an appointment. An exact date in April has not but determined, but SSA will continue to give [updates online](#).

### The Affordable Connectivity Program Can Help SSI Recipients Get Internet Access

The Affordable Connectivity Program is a Federal Communications Commission benefit program that helps ensure that households can afford the broadband they need for work, school, healthcare and more. The Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) provides a discount of up to \$30 per month toward internet service for eligible households or \$75 per month for households on qualifying Tribal lands. Any household with an individual who receives SSI is eligible to receive discounted internet service through the ACP. Social Security doesn't count ACP assistance as income or a resource for SSI purposes.

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## SOAR Jobs



- **Connecticut:** New Reach is seeking a SOAR Specialist to provide SOAR services and healthcare coordination in Fairfield County, Connecticut.
- **Florida:** South County Mental Health Center, Inc., is seeking a full-time SOAR Benefits Specialist to assist clients applying for disability benefits utilizing the SOAR model in Delray Beach, Florida.
- **North Carolina:** The Servant Center is seeking a full-time SOAR Disability & Eligibility Specialist to provide outreach and support to homeless adults.
- **Texas:** IntegralCare is seeking a full-time SOAR Specialist based in Austin, Texas.

Learn more about these positions on the [SOARWorks website](#). Do you have a job posting you would like to share with the SOAR community? Please submit it to the [SAMHSA SOAR TA Center](#)!





The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access, and Recovery (SOAR) Technical Assistance (TA) Center is sponsored by SAMHSA, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

Disclaimer: The SAMHSA SOAR Technical Assistance Center is sending this eNews with support from SAMHSA, HHS. Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official view of HHS or SAMHSA.

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